



Early Journal Content on JSTOR, Free to Anyone in the World

This article is one of nearly 500,000 scholarly works digitized and made freely available to everyone in the world by JSTOR.

Known as the Early Journal Content, this set of works include research articles, news, letters, and other writings published in more than 200 of the oldest leading academic journals. The works date from the mid-seventeenth to the early twentieth centuries.

We encourage people to read and share the Early Journal Content openly and to tell others that this resource exists. People may post this content online or redistribute in any way for non-commercial purposes.

Read more about Early Journal Content at <http://about.jstor.org/participate-jstor/individuals/early-journal-content>.

JSTOR is a digital library of academic journals, books, and primary source objects. JSTOR helps people discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content through a powerful research and teaching platform, and preserves this content for future generations. JSTOR is part of ITHAKA, a not-for-profit organization that also includes Ithaka S+R and Portico. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

THE PERILS OF THE REPUBLIC.

BY GOLDWIN SMITH.

IN the American Republic high hopes for humanity, as we all know, are embarked. To its struggles and vicissitudes the eyes of all of us, but especially those of its neighbors and partners on this continent, are turned. It has just been the scene of a notable uprising of the moral force against evil, especially commercial, but also municipal, and to some extent general. A survey of the situation and of the forces with which reform has to contend naturally suggests itself, and may be made in a spirit of hope.

The peril which presents itself most prominently is, perhaps, that of the deluge of alien immigration to which it seems hardly possible to set bounds. Very difficult it is to close the hospitable gate which has so long stood open to the distressed or the adventurous of all lands. The educational test probably avails little. It may fail to exclude the most alien and the most dangerous immigration of all. The original population of the States, it is true, was mixed. But there was nothing unassimilable in the Dutchman, the Frenchman or the Swede. Irish immigration frightened Americans into Know-nothingism. But about the worst that it did, after all, was to fill the ranks of Tammany. It has found its level and is a source of alarm no more. Not so the Italian, with his Mafia, or the Russian and Polish exile. The spirit of European revolution and of European anarchism is invading American cities. Sympathy with political assassination is proclaimed at a great meeting at New York. Bombs, those deadly weapons of anarchism, against which civilization may have to defend itself by strong measures, are beginning to be thrown on this continent. Great American cities now are ceasing to be American. The public school has worked wonders in the way of assimilation. But the assimilation must for some time

be rather that of intellect than of character, political or moral. The common school of New England or Scotland was hardly the prototype of its successor at the present day. It was strongly religious and probably not unparental.

On the character of the American people, their good sense, their self-reliance, their love of personal independence, their respect for law and property, the Republic has rested more than on government or institutions. A couple of years spent in intercourse with the people of a country town have sufficed to breed a firm belief in the stability of that foundation. Any political or social question those people, with the facts fairly before them and sufficient time for consideration, would probably decide aright. But their vote seems now in danger of being overwhelmed by that of the alien population of the cities.

Together with this dangerous tidal-wave of immigration, and partly as a consequence of it, comes industrial disturbance of a formidable character, and extending in its effects to the social and political spheres. Factories have everywhere multiplied the wage-earning class and gathered it into inflammable masses in the great cities. It has learned to organize and struggle for its own class interests, apart from those of the rest of the community. It has largely lost its faith in the religion which taught that the social order was providential and that for those who had the humbler and poorer lot in this world there would be compensation in the next. Education has stirred its aspirations and stimulated its envy by bringing it to a nearer view of the advantages of wealth. It has opened a ready ear to teachers who tell it that all wealth is its creation, rightfully belongs to it, has been taken away from it by a usurping caste and ought to be restored to it. This, not a philosophic dream of universal equality and felicity, is what Labor means by "Socialism." The result is militant unionism, with leaders whose vocation is industrial war, and incessant strikes ruinous to production, destructive of the value of labor and ominous of civil strife, to which indeed they have more than once given birth, Chicago as the metropolis of alien labor being the natural field of the collision.

Socialism proper is a vision of equality and felicity in a world of inequality and endurance. Never has it presented itself in a more fascinating or apparently practical form than in the "Utopia" of Sir Thomas More, who, however, so far as we

know, took not a single step towards its realization. No attempt was ever made to realize Plato's "Republic." Sparta's military communism was based on helotage. But the name of Socialism is assumed by a very practical movement for the use of political power in an attack on accumulated wealth and the transfer of it to the class which arrogates to itself the title of "Labor."

Wealth has to a vast and threatening extent accumulated in certain hands, though not in those of a caste, as Labor manifestoes imply; for of the millionaires on this continent at all events almost all have risen from humble beginnings, if not from the ranks of Labor. Millionairism would appear to be largely the natural offspring of an age of vast commercial enterprises, together with commercial concentration such as is produced by the elimination of the middleman with ultimate benefit—to the consumer. Still, the power it gives is a political danger, though one on which the world is now pretty well on its guard. The millionaire's idle and dissipated heir, with his vulgar sensuality and display, is a serious danger to society. At him the finger of social revolution is pointed with fatal effect. In England, hereditary wealth, if it is in land, has cut out for it a certain measure of territorial and municipal duties which, on the whole, have hitherto been not very badly performed, at least by the resident holders of single estates. It is moreover held under the censorship of a generally moral and polished society. The profligate heir of millions in America has no duty cut out for him, and is free from social censorship of any kind.

Decay of religious belief and hopes has been noticed as an element in the production of industrial discontent. To whatever extent it may have gone, it cannot fail to be a serious change of the national character, which has hitherto been generally and fundamentally religious. The grasping desire of growing suddenly rich may surely be traceable in some measure to the decline of spiritual interests and of hopes beyond this present world.

The moral recoil so manifest of late, and so hopeful, has shown itself partly in exposure of commercial fraud, partly in insurrection against the reign of corruption in great cities, which has, no doubt, been aggravated by the influx of aliens, instruments ready to the hand of municipal intrigue; as at San Francisco, where, it now appears, there was a frightful reign of corruption bossed by a French Jew. At Philadelphia, St. Louis, and Minneapolis,

reform has triumphed. But without a radical change of municipal government the triumph will be short. The victory won and the effort spent, honest citizens will return to their business, and the rogues will return to theirs. A great city cannot be run with a village organization. The business is too onerous and complicated. The citizens are too little known to each other to act generally in concert or exercise a collective choice. A demagogic government, always going for reelection, can have no settled policy or foresight. What bank, what great commercial concern, could prosper under such administration? The adoption of a skilled, stable and really responsible administration, in place of the demagogic and ephemeral system, is the indispensable condition of a permanent reform. That effort sooner or later will have to be made. Washington has shown the way. Galveston is following and, we are assured, with the best results.

The statistics of homicide are ominous, and seem to imply a growing spirit of violence and contempt of law. The list is, of course, swelled by lynchings, and lynching is Southern. But it has shown a tendency to spread Northwards. Local character, such as that for which Kentucky is proverbial, may also go for a good deal. Still there must be a weakness of government and a failure of respect for law. It may be partly because the judiciary is elective, though the elections appear generally to be good, that the judges seem not to have sufficient control of their courts. Of judicial corruption, such as prevailed in the days of Barnard and Cardozo, no suspicion seems now to prevail. But wealth appears still to have too good a chance of escaping the penalties of crime by the lavish purchase of chicane.

It is a change to be noted, as one which entails liabilities and possibly perils, that the American Republic has of late been becoming a war power. A singular effect of this on national character is seen in the development of flag-worship, which would have filled the soul of Jefferson with dismay. For wrapping up some goods in the sacred bunting a peddler is prosecuted, while the policeman who arrested him receives a decoration. Circumstances have changed, and it is difficult to see how far the necessity of arming and cultivating the war spirit may go. That there would be war with Japan about the exclusion of Japanese children from Californian schools was not likely. But Japan is there, and with China in her train. Her ambition has evidently

been awakened. She wants room for expansion. She has already a foot on the Pacific coast of this continent. The Panama Canal will not be open for American ships of war at all events in less than ten years. Did Lord Lansdowne, when, by his treaty with Japan, he practically encouraged her to fly at the throat of Russia, foresee the consequences of his diplomacy to this continent and to India? Was he not like Carlyle's canary-bird in the show, that, with a match in its beak, fired a cannon?

An American citizen, when surprise was expressed at the absence on the part of his people of any expression of sympathy with the Boers' struggle for independence, replied: "The blood of the Filipinos choked us." Foreign conquest, followed by territorial aggrandizement and domination over a subject race, represented a startling departure from the principles of the Jeffersonian Republic. The purchase of Alaska was a natural application of that article of the Monroe Doctrine which bars European colonization. An alternative plan, proposed at the time in the case of Hawaii, was the neutralization of the islands under the guarantee of the Great Powers as an international port of call. Aggrandizement, in this case, won the day. In the cases of Santo Domingo and St. Thomas, the tradition of moderation prevailed. A very eminent member of the Republican party, J. M. Forbes, of Massachusetts, is recorded as saying that the war with Spain was made to keep a party in power. No other cause, certainly, does a perusal of the diplomatic correspondence reveal. Spain surrenders everything but her honor; while, on the question of the "Maine," she tenders arbitration, which is tacitly refused. The war spirit was fired and, with it, the passion for aggrandizement. The people shouted for keeping all it had got. Journals held imperial language. President McKinley said that, in annexing the Filipinos, "Duty was taking the hand of Destiny." The rest all know, and the consequences of domination over weaker races to national character and sentiment are everywhere the same.

Discussion of the negro question has become wearisome and almost hopeless. In its present state, that question is the monument of the headlong philanthropy, not untainted by party passion, of the public men into whose hands, by the fatal murder of Lincoln, the work of reconstruction was thrown. Had the Government of the United States been national, as there was an

opportunity for making it after the defeat of Secession, the negro might have been constituted a ward of the State, without political power, but protected by the nation in his personal and political rights. The interposition of some white race free from the Southern antipathy to the negro, as a mediating and reconciling power, is a solution which seems to commend itself to Mr. Booker Washington, the wisest friend of the negro. But there would hardly be sufficient security against the union of the imported race with the Southern whites and the perpetuation of the antagonism perhaps in an aggravated form. At the commencement of the Civil War, some of us in England, ardent foes of slavery and friends of the Republic, hung back, not only from unwillingness to bear a part in the kindling of civil war, but because we could not help doubting whether it would be possible or wise to reincorporate States radically differing from the North in their social structure and, consequently, in political character and aptitude. The result has too well justified our hesitation.

In a notice of Chief-Justice Clark's pamphlet on "The Defects of the American Constitution" some time ago, attention was called to the changes for the worse which "Time, the great innovator," had been making in the American Constitution, while "man had been doing nothing to change for the better"; the operation of constitutional amendment being very difficult in itself and rendered practically impossible by party. From the House of Representatives, which was intended, no doubt, by the framers of the Constitution to be the special organ of the people's will, power, by a combination of influences which the framers of the Constitution could not foresee, has been transferred to the Senate. At the same time, the disproportion of population between the States has become such that the Senate can no longer be deemed anything like a representation of the people. What now is the character of the assembly in which power is vested? Lowell long ago could speak of the Senate as "that secret and irresponsible club which governed the country for its own private benefit." Mr. Ostrogorski, in his work on "Democracy and the Organization of Political Parties," the fair and painstaking character of which so far as relates to England I can attest, says:

"The Senate of the United States no longer has any resemblance to that august assembly which provoked the admiration of the Tocquevilles. It

would be no use looking for the foremost men of the nation there; neither statesmen nor orators are to be found in it. In wisdom, in balance, in dignity, the States' chamber is far inferior to the popular branch of Congress. The Senate no longer acts as a conservative element, as a brake for checking popular impulses, for moderating heedless ardor; on the contrary, it is this assembly which often gives the signal for extravagant conduct either in financial matters or in the sphere of foreign politics. The Senate is, for the most part, filled with men of mediocre or no political intelligence, some of whom, extremely wealthy, multi-millionaires, look on the Senatorial dignity as a title for ennobling their well or ill gotten riches; others, crack wire-pullers, State bosses, or representatives of large private industrial or financial concerns, find the Senate a convenient base of operations for their intrigues and their designs on the public interest; others, again, without convictions or without definite or well-matured ideas, but sensitive to every breath of public opinion and fond of vulgar popularity, act as the noisy mouthpieces of every movement which flatters the susceptibilities of the crowd. They represent everything save enlightened opinion, to which they do not pay the slightest heed."*

This is strong censure, yet it is not stronger than may be heard in private conversation, or than is really implied in the word "stand-pat" used to describe the policy of the Senate.

Attention was called in the same article to the effect of the system of Montesquieu adopted by the framers of the Constitution, which, by strictly separating the executive from the legislative, greatly interferes with the training of a school of statesmen. For a President you have to go to the platform; and he, when elected, has to go to the Bar or the business world for his Cabinet. Any great question, such as that of the relations, present or future, between Canada and the United States, has no one to take it up, nor can any continuity of aim be discerned in the policy of the Washington Government. The President, on the expiration of his term, goes out of public life. Fortunately, so far as administration apart from general policy is concerned, the supply of statesmen is abundant.

One consequence of these defects in the Constitution, perhaps, is the tendency alleged, though not very marked, to encroachment on the part of the President, which would be a bad mode of supplying the need.

Of all the perils, however, which beset American democracy, the greatest and the one which, unless it can be averted, will be

* Vol. ii, p. 542.

fatal—is the division of the nation into two organized factions, waging for power and place a perpetual war of intrigue, vituperation and corruption. In the case of the disputed election for the Presidency between the parties of Tilden and Hayes, civil war itself seemed at hand, though no vital principle of government, but only the possession of power and patronage, was immediately at stake. Anything like a real division of principle—such as that which in England, the cradle of the party system, existed between the party of the Stuarts and that of the Hanoverians—cannot since the abolition of slavery be traced in the United States. Platforms are made up before Presidential elections like a merchant's advertisements of goods to suit the taste of the hour. The country is kept constantly under the malign influence of bosses perpetually active in their work of intrigue and corruption. The expenditure at elections which outvies the cost of monarchies, though it implies wide-spread corruption, is far from being the greatest part of the evil. To the independence of public men and their loyalty to the commonwealth, party bondage is fatal. A signal proof of this is the pension list, of which no one seems to doubt the character, but against which no one dares to say a word. The other day a vast addition was made to it in the shape of pensions for service only. In private you hear the truth about this measure; yet, not only was there no division in either House, but not a single voice was raised against the measure. Neither party dares to run the risk of losing a sectional vote, which is thus enabled to work its will in a land of freemen. Seeing this, one feels almost inclined to exclaim that the handwriting is on the wall. It unquestionably is, unless the yoke of organized faction can be broken and the allegiance of the people can be restored to the commonwealth.

The Republic, in the coming time, seems likely to have many occasions for calling on the patriotism and wisdom of her citizens. Recent events have shown that she has a large reserve of both qualities to answer to her call.

GOLDWIN SMITH.